

250 John Perry Ball
att. Perry Ball
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A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before
The Right Reverend the
Lord Bishop of *Rocheſter*

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C O N F I R M A T I O N

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W E S T R A M.

By GEORGE LEWIS, A. M.
VICAR of WESTRAM. *K*

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L O N D O N,
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ACTS viii. 17.

*Then laid they their Hands on them,
and they received the Holy Ghost.*



O U are now assembled
Men and Brethren, Sons and
Daughters of our Holy and
Apostolical Church of *England*,
to partake of that blessed Spi-
rit, that is herein communicated to all the
true Members of Christ our Head, thro'
the Divine Favour and Gracious Priviledge
of a Commission granted by the great Be-
nefactor of Mankind to certain chosen Per-
sons, in order to supply his Absence, when
he himself shou'd be taken up into Heaven;
and to carry on effectually the great Work
of Man's Redemption :

For as long as there is a Church on Earth,
there must be fitting Persons separated for
this holy and heavenly Calling, whereunto
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their great Lord and Master calls 'em, to take the Government and Oversight of his Flock, and exercise Authority in Christ's Stead:

For what Wise Man builds a City, and leaves every Man in it to do what seemeth Good in his own Eyes? And is not the Church of God, call'd the City of God, the new *Jerusalem*, and shall Christ's Kingdom be the only Kingdom in the World without Rule and without Government?

Nor can the chief Governour be without inferiour Officers even whilst he is most present, much less when he is to take a Journey into a far Country ;

And therefore our Saviour is inquiring in such a Case, *who is that faithful and wise Steward whom his Lord shall make Ruler over his Household, to give them their portion of meat in due Season*, Luke xii. 42.

Men are free perhaps to grant every thing we contend for in honour of the first Apostles;

And I shall have little Occasion to argue for the Authority of *Peter* and *John* the Apostles and Ministers of Confirmation in the Text:

But this untoward Generation are not so free to allow the Bishops, the Priests, and Deacons of our own Days any Priviledges, whecher

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whether Spiritual or Temporal, tho' it were (as I am sure too oft it is) to their own Hindrance, their own Destruction :

I should be wanting therefore to the Duty of this Day, the great and good Office of a Bishop might be lost upon you, and what I might further add in the Progress of this Discourse, of the benefit of Confirmation fall to the Ground — if I do not first prove, what is now to be the Foundation of all your Hope, and all your Faith in this Day's Performance, to wit, that the Bishops of this Age have the same Office and Commission, the same Honour and Authority in every respect the same that the Apostles had ;

And doubt ye not, but believe that the holy Spirit, the blessed Comforter which our Saviour promised, does accompany the Office of our present Bishop, who comes to you as the Successor of an Apostle, that is, a Messenger of Christ, and in Christ's Stead, and will be now as truly giv'n you in this Sacred Ordinance administer'd by the laying on of his Hands, as it was by the Apostles, tho' not visibly, yet effectually, if not in the same miraculous Manner, yet to the same saving Purpose.

This is a Doctrine many carnal and worldly Men are apt to say does but tend
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to establish a Spiritual Dominion, and they who stick at nothing to make our Church Governors either despis'd or envy'd, are not ashamed to call this Apostolical Rite a Piece of Popery, the Noise of which is of late very artfully made to run high against all that is Sacred, all that is Orthodox.

From a Discourse of this Kind Men take Fire, and imagine, if we vindicate the Apostolical, the Episcopal Office, we do but labour to establish an Authority this wiser Age will never bear, and we may try, but in vain forsooth, to lord it over God's Heritage.

But far be this from me, and also from my Brethren, who are call'd not to preach themselves, but Jesus Christ; such an Attempt the stubborn, the atheistical, the schismatical, the unaccountable Humour of the present Times, may well indeed defy;

Such a spiritual Subjection might be profitable for you instead of another Extreme, but is not for us, and we may better profit by what the Men of this Generation may falsely count our Loss.

This antiquated *Romish* Yoke, which our Enemies cast us in the Teeth, and which they wou'd have Men believe for Self-Ends we are desirous to introduce again, 'twas the Bishops and Clergy of the Church of
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ENGLAND that chiefly kept it from your Necks, however since ill requited and shamefully intreated.

And whatever our Lot shall be, pray we that neither Popery nor arbitrary Power may ever find a Footing in this our Land of Milk and Honey, to wit, our Christian Liberty and our reform'd Religion.

Our Interest is more closely united than you may imagine, our Advantage is mutual, however the Devil and his Agents are every Day dividing us, we are to watch for your Souls, and so help on your Salvation, and that helps on our own, and your receiving duly the ingrafted Word is Matter of Joy to us here, and will plead for us in the great Day of Account.

But to further your Salvation at this time, and agreeable to the present Occasion of our assembling this Day, I shall in the Prosecution of this Discourse offer to your Consideration these following Particulars.

1st, I shall endeavour to shew that our blessed Saviour did institute and appoint an Order of Religious Persons for the Government of his CHURCH, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying the Body of Christ, to endure to the End of the World.

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2dly, I shall prove in the 2d place that the Office of Confirmation, by laying on of Hands, is an Apostolical Rite, of constant Usage in the Church, and now devolv'd upon the Bishops, as Successors of the Apostles.

3dly, I shall consider the Benefit of Confirmation:

4thly, I shall observe that the Office of a Bishop is a worthy Work, and in what Veneration he ought to be accounted for his Work's Sake.

5thly, and lastly, I shall exhort you in the last place *that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.*

1st, I am to shew that our blessed Saviour did institute and appoint an Order of Religious Persons for the Government of the Church, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying the Body of Christ, to endure to the End of the World.

While the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls remain'd on Earth, he made it his Business to discharge the Office of a faithful Pastor; and to carry on the Salvation of Man-

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Mankind when he should ascend unto his Father, he commits the Government of the Church to his Apostles, and gives them, together with Disciples of an inferior Station, the same Power which he himself had received and executed in his own Person. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you,* John xx. 21.

The Father hath given Power to the Son to forgive Sins, *Matt. ix. 6.* And Christ says to his Apostles, *John xx. 23. Whose Sins ye remit, shall be remitted unto them.* The Father gave Keys unto the Son, as Ensigns of his absolute Power and Dominion, *Isai. xxii. 22.* So the Son gave the Keys to his Apostles, *Matth. xvi. 19.*

The Father made the Son the Foundation or chief Corner Stone, *Matth. xxi. 42.* the Son plac'd his Apostles next to him, ye are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.

And that there might be daily added to the Church such as should be sav'd, the Apostles, who had the Rule over it, chose Fellow - Labourers and Assistants in the Work of the Ministry; and for a Supply of Mortality, took care to ordain others to succeed in their Office, and for whose Encouragement Christ declares in the 28th of *Matth. v. 20. And lo I am with you alway,*

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even unto the End of the World. Which Promise of our Saviour must necessarily accompany the Successors of dying Apostles, who were to be delegated by them as they were by Christ, and so on *ὡς ἡ συνέλευσις τοῦ αἰῶνος* till the Consummation of all things.

And to prevent the many Inconveniences and horrid Mischiefs of an irregular and arbitrary assuming those Powers, God has instituted, ordained, and continued a visible Way in his Church, by which we may by visible Characters plainly discern our Spiritual Governors, to whom is committed the Celebration of God's Service, the administering the holy Sacraments, the Preservation of Peace and Order, and the guiding the People in the Way of Truth.

To this End we find the Apostles by a standing Rule and settled Ceremony of laying on of Hands, with Prayers for the Gift of the Holy Ghost, setting apart chosen Persons for the Ministry, that there might be a continual Succession of Pastors and Teachers to rule and feed the Flock of their now absent Lord, and be accountable to him, as Stewards for the Exercise of this their holy Calling.

Hence we read *Mathias* was chosen into the Place of *Judas*, and he took his Bishoprick, *Acts* i. 20. *Saul* and *Barnabas* after the

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the Death of *James* were added to the number of the Apostles, *Acts* xiii. 21.

And as trifling and mean a Ceremony as Imposition of Hands may seem to some Men, who have a Faculty of despising every Ordinance of God, yet must it bear the Value God has stamp'd upon it, and is not to be measur'd by our Standard, but to be weigh'd in the Ballance of the Sanctuary.

This is a Charter granted from Christ to which the Promise of his Presence and all spiritual Blessing is annex'd, and you have no other sure way of obtaining Salvation, but in and thro' these Means God has prescrib'd to be administer'd by such as have his Commission in this regular appointed Manner,

What need *Titus* be left at *Crete*, and *Timothy* at *Ephesus* to ordain, if those that fancied themselves Gifted Men might become Teachers and Governours without Ordination and laying on of Hands?

No doubt there were some Lay Men under the Law, that could Sacrifice or burn Incense as well as *Aaron*, for Instance, *Uzziah*, but it pertain'd not to him, but only to the Priests the Sons of *Aaron*, that are Consecrated to burn Incense, 2 *Chro.* 26. 18.

And *Uzziah* got a Leprosy to his Death for meddling with it.

That the Sin of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* may be now committed in the Gospel is plain enough: *Jude xi.* where it is call'd the Gain-saying of *Corah*, to wit, against a Gospel Priest-hood, as his was against the Priest-hood of the Law, *Numb. xvi. 10.*

But being perswaded that you who hear me this Day are already convinc'd that the Office of a Bishop is all one with that of an Apostle, or which is the same, that a Bishop is also an Apostle (for thus believing are we now come together) I proceed with the more chearfulness, and greater brevity to shew in the Second Place.

That the Office of Confirmation by laying on of Hands, is an Apostolical Rite of ancient Usage in the Church, and devolv'd upon the Bishops, as Successors of the Apostles.

The Church of *England* has declar'd Confirmation to be a Solemn, Ancient and Laudable Custom continued from the Apostles Times, and is perform'd by the Bishops laying on his Hands on Children that have been Baptiz'd and Instructed in the Catechism of Christian Religion, and praying over 'em, and blessing 'em. And that this was the Practice of the Apostles appears from

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from what is here recorded of their Acts in respect to the *Samaritan* Converts :

For when the Apostles, *ver. 14.* of this Chapter which were at *Jerusalem*, heard that *Samaria* had receiv'd the Word of God, they sent unto them *Peter* and *John*, Two of the Colledge of Apostles;

Who when they were come down, pray'd for them, that they might receive the holy Ghost (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them) only they were Baptiz'd in the Name of the Lord Jesus, then and not before, it follows, they laid their Hands on them and they receiv'd the holy Ghost.

To this known Practice of the Apostles perform'd also by the Bishops in succeeding Ages, the Writers of the Greek and Latin Church give ample Testimony.

St. Cyprian bears witness to the same Practice in his Days, as is here related to be done by the two Apostles in the Text.

The same thing, says he, is practis'd among us, that they who are Baptiz'd in the Church, are presented to the Governors of it, to wit, the Bishops, that by our Prayers and Imposition of Hands they may obtain the holy Ghost, and be perfected (or confirm'd) with the Seal of Christ.

St. Jerom allows it to be a Catholick Custom for the Bishop to go Abroad, and lay on

on his Hands, and pray for the Gifts of the Holy Ghost upon those whom Priests and Deacons have already Baptiz'd in lesser Villages.

Phillip the Deacon we read, Baptiz'd the People of *Samaria*, yet did he not confirm, this was to be the Act of an Apostle, and therefore you hear that *Peter* and *John* went to lay their Hands on them, whereby they might receive the Holy Ghost, which cou'd not be confer'd by *Phillip* or any other of an inferior Order.

Thus we find the Persons laying on of Hands, or confirming, must be no other than Apostles, or which is the same, the Bishops the Persons to be confirm'd, such as have been before Baptiz'd, and lastly, the Effect is the receiving the Holy Ghost.

Which is the Benefit or Privilege I come now to consider in the Third Place.

If you are perswaded, as I trust you are, that the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of the Hands of the Apostles, for the confirming of all those who Believ'd and were baptiz'd, and that the same Spirit is transfer'd by the Apostles to the Bishops of our Church as their Successors, (so call'd from a successive laying on of Hands from the Apostles to the present Bishops) and this is as certain as that our Saviour promis'd to be with the Apostles, that

on CONFIRMATION. 15

that is, with his Holy Spirit to accompany the Apostolical Office to the End of the World, then may you be all assur'd this Day, that when the Bishop, after the Example of the Apostles, shall pray for you, and lay his Hand upon your Heads, that you may receive the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, this Episcopal, this Apostolical Performance, will be as effectual now as ever, if you be not wanting to your selves, to confirm you in the Faith and strengthen you in all Goodness.

Do not imagine, that because the Holy Ghost does not visibly descend, nor is attended with the Gifts of Tongues and Miracles, as at the Day of *Pentecost*, do not therefore say there is no Holy Ghost; *the Wind bloweth where it listeth*, and as unaccountable is the Operation of the Spirit.

There is not a Necessity now, as in the Infant State of the Church, for extraordinary Gifts, it suffices that we have an internal Grace communicated in the ordinary regular Way.

We are to wait GOD's Blessing and his Holy Spirit in the stated Measures and fix'd Methods of a settled Church, we must receive his Gifts by the Administration of his Ministers rightly commission'd and duly sent, and we have no Pretence by any other

other By-ways to the Divine Promise of the Spirit, and 'tis in vain to seek G O D but where he has promis'd to be found.

Men that contemn other Ordinances may slight this, their Carnal Apprehensions cannot fathom a Mystery, and they are not able to conceive what laying on of Hands can signify, and so they may be as ignorant of the Benefits confer'd by the sprinkling of Water in Baptism, or the breaking of Bread and pouring out Wine in the other Sacrament.

But I hope from this seasonable assembling of your selves better Things of you, and Things that accompany that Salvation you are now a working.

To which End you come to ratify and confirm a Vow made for you in Baptism, and to enter your Personal Engagement before the Bishop, who, as the Representative of C H R I S T, will receive you as Sheep into the Fold of the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, and give you Power to be added to the Communion of the Church, which you could not be, without at least a Readiness and Disposition of Mind to be thus confirm'd, when an Opportunity should offer, such as God has put into the Heart of our Bishop to afford you this Day, by letting you into the Privilege

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vilege and Benefit of this holy Apostolical Ordinance, to be perform'd by one of the highest Order in the Church of God, which must beget in our Minds the greater Esteem for an Office that none can meddle with but the Bishops, as Successors of the Apostles, and which leads me to observe in the fourth place,

That the Office of a Bishop is a worthy Work, and in what Veneration he ought to be accounted for his Work's sake.

Were Men but once perswaded of the great Truth that I have been asserting, and which is as plain as any in Holy Writ, that according to a regular Apostolical Succession (which is the very Foundation of all our Christian Performances) from Christ, the Founder of our Faith, to the present Times, the Bishops, and by the laying on of their Hands, the inferior Clergy, derive their Commission, and claim the honourable Titles of being Ministers of GOD, Ministers of JESUS CHRIST, Ministers of the New Testament, Ambassadors for Christ, Stewards of God, of the Mysteries of God, of the manifold Grace of God; if, I say, Men had any Sense of Religion, they would pay
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some Deference to those who are thus in Authority to speak to them the Word of God, who have the Rule over 'em, and who watch for their Souls, a becoming Esteem would always accompany their Persons, who can so effectually administer to the Salvation of the Flock committed to them.

And if the inferior Officers in Christ's Church claim a Reverence by virtue of the Commission granted by the Bishops, then how much greater Veneration must be the Tribute due to the highest Order in our Church? And if any thing could be able to gain a suitable Respect, we have our Saviour's Declaration in this Case, *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.* And who is there that hates a Minister and contemns his Order, but what will be found a Man of no Religion?

Do not say, that when the Clergy insist upon the Apostolical Mission, it is preaching up themselves, the Neglect of it is rather a Fault too general.

Modesty may plead for our Defect in this Particular, yet is it a Defect when what we do in holy Things cannot otherwise have that Weight it would have, if you are but made to know that what is
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done by the Authority of the Bishop and his Clergy under him, is ratify'd and confirm'd in Heaven :

And if an Officer under a Temporal Prince does wisely to insist upon the Dignity of his Commission, why shall not the Minister of the King of Kings claim the Honour due to his holy Calling? And what Calling more honourable than that which ministers to your Salvation, and is now, Christ is absent, the only Instrument on Earth in Christ's Stead, of reconciling you to God? For tho' it is God only that forgiveth Sins, yet confirmeth he the Word of his Servant, and performeth the Counsel of his Messenger, *Isaiah* xliv. 25. Let a Man think what he please, thus he ought to think of the Ministers of Christ. You have now a Bishop of our Church, who after the Example of the great Apostle, and according to the Advice he gave to *Timothy*, takes heed to himself, and neglects not to exercise the Gift that is in him :

He comes to do the Work of a Bishop, which the same Apostle calls a worthy Work.

He comes with all Authority to admit you into the Society of the Church, and all the Privileges of her Communion, to compleat by Confirmation what we the

inferior Clergy have begun by Baptism, which being a Covenant made by others in your Name, you are now to ratify before him, who by a superiority of Jurisdiction is over the Church of God in this Place.

By the laying on of his Hands, you will be own'd as true Members of our Church, and it will be his Prayers and his Desire, my Beloved that you continue so stedfast and immoveable, so as never to separate from her by any Act of Schism which his Soul abhorreth, and which ought to be so abominated by all the sound Members of our Church.

He comes unto us as a Successor of an Apostle, upon whom the Care of this and other Churches in this Diocess is devolv'd, and I may add in some Measure, the Care of all our Churches in another Capacity ;

But here I will not offend, notwithstanding, as the Apostle speaks of himself to his *Corinthians*, in his 2d. Ep. x. 8. *Tho' I shou'd boast somewhat more of his Authority which the Lord hath given him for Edification*, I should have no shame.

Thus, as he who desireth the Office of a Bishop desireth a worthy Work, so ought he, as the Apostle speaks, to be esteem'd for his Work's sake :

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And as we are to revere and honour the Apostolical, the Episcopal Institution, which only has a Right to the Spirit that our Lord has promis'd, and which we are sure attends those who are thus duly commission'd, we cannot but look upon such Men with as great contempt who pretend to the Spirit without this Commission, who run and are not sent, who administer in Corners and Conventicles without Authority, only as they account a Toleration so, which does but exempt from Penalties, and suffers a Separation, as the Law of *Moses* a Divorce for the Hardness of Mens Hearts; and under this Cloak, Men assume an Honour to themselves, which none ought to take, but he who is call'd of God, as was *Aaron*, and yet how boldly shall a Mechanick from a Counter leap into a Pulpit, and usurp the sacred Office of a Preacher; sure none that allows the true lineal Apostolical Succession, but must think all Acts null and void that they do, who have not that Commission, which can only give the Sanction, and make them valid.

And what shall I say of those who separate from a Church that is Apostolical? Sure a causeless Separation is an Act of Schism, and a Sin no Law of Man can forgive, and nothing but the tenderness of an erroneous Conscience,

Conscience, thro' invincible Ignorance, which is and ought to be the Object of an Indulgence, can plead an excuse before God, who knows the Secrets of our Hearts ;

But 'tis not enough for Men to separate to turn their Backs, but they must recoil, they must return with doubl'd Fury.

Sad indeed is our Case, that amidst all the Advantages of an establish'd Church, and the Declaration of his Majesty (as we shall at all Times gratefully acknowledge any Royal Favour to the Church of *England*, who as God shall bless Her, and Kings protect Her, will be found the best support of Monarchy) we have notwithstanding, not only Heresy and Schism to Combat with, but virulent Pamphlets every Day, that strike at the Fundamentals of all Religion, and whatever is Orthodox, is become the Object of unrestrain'd Malice, and insulted by Free-thinkers, Free-speakers, and all the Schismatical Gain-sayers of this Age.

Are we out of the reach of Heathen Tribunals? And are there no other Persecutors, is there no other Martyrdom but what inflicts Death upon us?

Yes, our Saviour says, there is *reviling, and saying all manner of Evil against us*, and this we meet with plentifully every Day, our Persons are disgrac'd, and eve-

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ry Opportunity is thirsted after and glory'd in of exposing a Man in holy Orders to Publick Shame.

How is our poor Church rent asunder and crucify'd, as it were, by Faction and Schism? Many of her Sons stand afar off, while Atheists, Deists, and Schismaticks, cast her in the Teeth; and Infidelity, under the Mask of Protestantism, seems to stand fairer to throw out all Religion, than any *Romish* Zeal can do to introduce Popery; into such melancholy Circumstances are we fall'n, evil in Quality, and many in Number.

This Age seems to be the Reverse of former Times.

It was the Complaint of a *Roman* Author, that they were not able to bear the Vices of the Times he liv'd in, these we can endure, and complain of another Extreme, that Virtue is an Eye-sore, and that Praise the World heretofore was not so ill-natur'd to deny the Dead, tho' envious enough to living Worth, is refus'd a blessed Saint now glorify'd in Heaven; but SHE that so loved our Nation, and built us Synagogues, and added to the comfortable Support of those who minister at GOD's Altar, shall not be forgotten by me when I remember thee our *Sion*,
and

and for the good Deeds SHE has done to the House of our God Her Memory is blessed, yea, and shall be blessed.

But different Times have different Vices and different Views.

In the Apostles Days *Simon Magus* thought it a Piece of Policy to purchase this Holy Ghost, now another Kind of Simony is more politick, not the purchasing the Spirit, but the buying of Spiritual Persons.

It was our Saviour's Complaint that Men sold in the Temple, and what would he now say? Would he not come with a Rod of Iron to chastize those who sell the very Temples and the Gifts dedicated to God's Service?

And they, whose *Godliness is Gain*, are now more politick than *Judas*, and know how to sell their Lord for more than Thirty Pieces.

A mistaken Zeal in the Infancy of Religion would have done Sacrifice to the Apostles, and now a contrary Fury, in these Days of a declining Piety, would gladly sacrifice a Bishop himself, a Successor of the same Apostles.

The Two Universities, that were of Old the boasted Glory of this our Land, the Bulwarks of Religion, and the Props of Mo-

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Monarchy, how are they now decry'd and debas'd by the Enemies of both?

And it were indeed an Argument too cutting, too powerful, to prove 'em useless, if any educated in a cheap and vile Seminary of Schism should find his Account greater than he who has been with much Pains and Study brought up in the Schools of the Prophets, and with no less Cost obtain'd such Degrees in those Learned Bodies, that are the wonted Steps to Honour and Preferment in Church and State.

And what have we left to boast that is truly Great, truly Christian, or truly English? We seem to have lost all Sense of Virtue and Religion, Justice and Moderation, and even of common Humanity and good Nature, our Divisions have introduc'd ugly Distinctions, and we appear like the Disciples of Two Parties, and not of one common Lord.

The Notions of Good and Evil are confounded, Vice shall now pass for Virtue, and receive a Sanction, as it serves the Interest of the several Sides; *even Rebellion shall be stil'd Loyalty, and Loyalty Rebellion; bitter is put for sweet, and sweet for bitter, Darknes for Light, and Light for Darknes.*

And what shall I more say? Time would fail me, and your Patience too,
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were I to observe all the untoward Circumstances that now render us a divided wicked People, and I fear I have been too long already.

It now remains that I exhort you, and that briefly, to follow a more excellent Way, that ye be blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, lest haply ye be found this Day to have receiv'd the Grace of God in vain.

Others must do what they please, play fast and loose with their Profession, become Time-servers, betray their Mother Church, countenance Schismatics, and truckle their Consciences to Men that have none, having their Persons in Admiration because of Advantage, for there can be no other Reason.

Let me now adjure you that come to be Confirm'd, that you be (according to the Design of this Sacred Ordinance) more strictly united to our Church, and be conformable Members in all Respects where her Principles and Doctrine, her Honour and Interest are concern'd.

Till this our Church be restor'd to her Primitive Discipline, which is much to be wish'd, and only to be wish'd, it behoves you to do much of your selves by Choice, what

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And till our Church be restor'd to its Rights and Privileges, and be freed from the Incumbrances of Sacrilege and Depredations, which are heavy Burdens, and Sins that so easily beset us, let us lament what we cannot amend, and pray for the Prosperity of our *Jerusalem*.

As you are now to make an open Profession of your Faith, be sure to hold it fast, without wavering, and being rooted and established in the Principles of the Church of *England*, stand up in her Defence against all Schismaticks and Hereticks, having sure Confidence in God's Promise, that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against his Church.

Then may our Enemies lay their Designs as deep as Hell, from whence they are taken, yet will they find that God is there also to defeat their Counsels; and if we, by our ill Lives, are not in the Plot, the Thoughts of Men will be but vain, and their Attempts unsuccessful.

The Well-being of our Church, next unto God, depends upon the steady Principles of Unity in her Sons and Daughters, for Divisions are as dangerous to the Church as Rebellion to the State.

And as the Apostle besought his *Corinthians*, so I beseech you by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye speak the same thing, and be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind and Judgment, that there be no Schisms, no Divisions among you, and that ye keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

Maintain your Integrity in these loose degenerate Times, and in our Days of Discord, study the Church's Unity, and the Means to preserve it, shewing out of a good Conversation your Works with Meekness of Wisdom, and living peaceable and quiet Lives in all Godliness and Honesty, in all things approving your selves the Disciples of the blessed Jesus, not by the distinguishing Mark of a Party, but the Badge of Christianity, to wit, the loving one another, being charitably minded toward those who mostly dissent from us, praying God *to bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred and are deceived*, and beseeching him to build up those Breaches in the Walls of our *Jerusalem* which Schismatics are every Day a making.

Be not of the Number of those (whose Malice, not their Moderation, is known to all Men) that so disdainfully, so despitefully speak against the Clergy.

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From such a Contempt of spiritual Guides, came all the dismal Tragedies, the Wars, Rebellions and Murders of the last Age ;

Our Fathers are gone to answer for those Things, and it behoves us to beware of the same Guilt of spiritual Disorder, Rebellion and Schism.

Tho' others go on to revile and speak bitter Things against us, let not any of you think of us otherwise then he ought to think, to wit, as of the Ministers of Christ, and we ought to have them always in double Honour that respect the Clergy.

Tho' God does not now Punish in a miraculous Manner, the factious Murmurers against the Priesthood, as in the Case of *Corah* and his Accomplices, who went down alive into the Pit, yet will he reserve for Judgment all such Contemners of his Messengers ; for the Service of the Ministers of the Gospel is as precious sure as that of the *Levites*, and the Order of the Church as dear unto him as that of the Synagogue.

And think it not beside the Duty of the Preacher this Day, If I have thus stretch'd out my Hand to uphold the Ark.

Finally, my Beloved, for the sake of him who hath call'd us into this State of Salvation, I now intreat you (as you are to take upon

30 A S E R M O N

upon your selves what others promis'd for you) so to take good heed to your selves, as to walk in all the Ordinances of the Lord blameless;

That being thus rooted and built up in him, you may be still more and more confirm'd in Goodness, and so go from Grace to Grace, from Strength to Strength, till this your Grace here, shall be compleated in Glory hereafter.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy.

To the only Wise God our Saviour be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and for ever. Amen



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